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INTRODUCTION to Research Notes: "Faits Malaccomplis and the Origins of Crisis"; and "Politics and the Cuban Missile Crisis": preliminary draft reports from the project, "Risks and Alternatives to Militarism After Desert Storm: Lessons from the Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis," a project of the Center for Psychosocial Studies in the Nuclear Age, Cambridge Hospital, Harvard Medical School.

In the space of a week in October, 1962, the leaders of the two superpowers--neither of them adequately warned by their intelligence and policymaking apparatus, the two largest in world history--each presented the other with a stunning and mutually dangerous surprise.

How could this happen?

The same question arose in August, 1990. The five-month Gulf Crisis that led to the Iraq War in 1991 began with a comparable pair of surprises for two opposing leaders: one the president of a superpower, the other the head of an oil-producing state and recent purchaser of the "third most technically sophisticated armed forces in the world."

As in 1962, an unforeseen and surprisingly reckless challenge--unlike before, clearcut aggression--was followed by an equally unforeseen and surprisingly reckless US response: indeed, the same response as in the previous case, a naval blockade accompanied by massive preparations for airstrike and invasion. (These were the only two instances of such a course in the postwar era).

The parallels do not stop there. On October 9, 1990, I wrote a memo listing the following characteristics of the Gulf Crisis as of that moment, every one of which, word for word, applied as well to the Cuban Missile Crisis as of late October, 1962:

"1. US warships are intercepting and searching, at gunpoint, ships of other nations on the high seas, implementing a US-initiated blockade.

2. The US is assembling, with all possible speed, a massive, offensively-oriented airstrike and invasion force of bombers, carrier and amphibious task forces and ground combat divisions, to support attack options ranging from "surgical airstrikes" to full-scale invasion against the country being blockaded.

3. The declared aim of the blockade and of the increasingly-

explicit threats of air and ground offensives is to force the country being blockaded and threatened to reverse and to withdraw to its own territory a deployment of its armed forces contrary to American interests and security.

4. This aim, and the blockade supporting it, has the endorsement of a majority of a regional organization of which the targeted country is a member (and also--in 1990 though not in 1962--of all the permanent members and nearly all of the other members of the Security Council of the UN and of the General Assembly).

5. It is generally assumed (though not officially declared) that the airstrike and invasion force being built up has other aims as well: ousting the leadership and regime of the country being targeted and destroying its military capability. The existence of these incentives to attack, strongly argued within the US, strengthens the credibility of the threat implied by the buildup.

6. These more ambitious goals--which go well beyond restoring the status quo ante--have not been endorsed by any regional association nor by the UN, nor have the offensive military means that would be necessary to achieve them. A unilateral US offensive would, on the contrary, almost surely be condemned by most states in the region, whose very stability would be threatened by the anti-American emotions such a US intervention would arouse in their own populations.

Nevertheless, US-initiated war appears very likely if the announced US and multilateral demands to restore the status quo ante are not met soon.

7. Congressional elections are coming up in one month. Political calculations--not only of implications for the imminent Congressional elections but for the Presidential election two years off--saturate every comparison of "options," though this is never acknowledged.

8. Prior to the onset of the crisis there was pressure by the opposition party to apply sanctions to the country now being blockaded, with the President resisting such proposals: both before and after the threatening surprise deployment, this Administration policy was described by its domestic opposition as "appeasement."

9. Hence--along with a total failure of the Administration to foresee the military moves threatening US interests, and Administration acceptance of deceptive assurances--the Administration was politically vulnerable when it was caught by surprise. If it had done nothing, it would have suffered in November elections and in the Presidential race two years later both from this passivity and failure, from having failed to foresee or forestall the move, and from imputed gullibility and weakness.

10. The deception came from someone who, while far from a formal ally, was being regarded as to some extent a partner in shaping events, or at least someone whose private word could be trusted. Public accusations of "lying" figured prominently in the President's surprisingly strong response.

11. The strength and speed of the President's countermoves--and of Allied and international support for them--were as surprising to most observers as the initial provocation, and totally unforeseen by the adversary.

12. If war comes in the near future, it will probably be deliberately initiated by the US, its demands and threats having not met with success.

13. However, there is a significant possibility of a loss of control by one side or the other--unauthorized action by subordinates, false alarms, accidents, misinterpreted or misattributed incidents, misinterpretation of alerts or reconnaissance--leading to an all-out "response" or preemption by the other side.

14. Moreover, a third party (in this case, Israel) might trigger all-out hostilities by its own misinterpretations, loss of control, or "defensive" actions (as Cuba came close to doing, by its antiaircraft fire in 1962) unauthorized by its major ally.

15. The decision-making process is dominated almost exclusively by the Executive Branch, with no decision-making role for Congress, or Allies: the crisis is seen, with a good deal of reality, as a duel between two individuals, the President and an opposing dictator."

Another analogy could have headed that list: both crises began with an attempted fait accompli, which led to a dangerous military crisis instead of to passive resistance by the US and its allies. (This was the nature, in each case, of the pair of surprises that constituted the crisis).

And each of them, of course, led to a spectacular US success, in terms the President defined and the country accepted: by far the two most dramatic US victories of the postwar era. To look critically, to question American decisions in these two cases--of all that might be looked at!--is to argue with success.

But there are times when that is what needs to be done. We can all be thankful that many of the dangers that seemed to loom in the Gulf Crisis were not realized, though others were, catastrophically. But in retrospect, most of the fears seem to have been well-founded, reflecting genuine risks. And what did happen was terrible enough.

Moreover, as months go by, there seems less and less basis for any belief that this was the war to end war, or the last such crisis. Nor should anyone be content alone with the Lessons of Iraq that the Pentagon learns, and teaches, or with the selling of a new Iraq Syndrome to replace the skeptical Vietnam model.

The list of parallels above--rather striking, it seems to me, for a pair of episodes I have nowhere else seen compared--seems adequate to make the case that an effort to learn lessons from either one will do well to make a comparative study. That was the study I proposed in October, 1990, and again in March, 1991 (see the attached memo, "Risks and Alternatives to Militarism After Desert Storm: Lessons from the Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis," March 23, 1991), and which is now being funded, mainly through the Center for Psychosocial Research in the Nuclear Age, Harvard University, and through the Agape Foundation. The accompanying draft reports are preliminary outputs from that study.

In my October memo, I suggested: "My own best understanding of the Cuban Crisis, much more than the conventional, currently-accepted accounts, reveals possible parallels beyond the surface ones that could explain a number of puzzling aspects of the present situation," starting with: "how the crisis arose, on both sides, including the surprising potential for mutual surprise, and the multiple consequences of attempting a fait accompli."

The two draft research notes that accompany this memo address precisely these questions. The thoughts on faits accomplis, in particular, draw on research and draft notes of mine that go back to 1964, and years in-between. As I wrote in October:

"My 1964 study of the Cuban Missile Crisis along with certain much less serious crises that shared certain common characteristics with it--the U-2 crisis of 1960, Suez, the Skybolt crisis of 1962--led me to identify a particular, complex and precise crisis-pattern such that one could predict and explain a great variety of sequential and associated phenomena from a few initial circumstances.

"I called my description of these phenomena and how they hung together: "Faits Malaccomplis and the Origins of Crisis." By the term "Faits Malaccomplis" I referred to attempts at a fait accompli that, for one reason or another, failed to achieve the specific effects sought; in failing, I discovered, these abortive efforts often generated crises, to the surprise of both parties. The Cuban Missile Crisis seemed to me the most significant example of this class of crises: until this fall."

The real power and rewards of this abstract model, I believe, remain to be demonstrated in its application to the full details of the Cuban Missile Crisis--many of which have never been

reported--and to a number of other crises to which I allude briefly in this overview. These comprehensive analyses and comparisons of the crises--including the escalation of the Vietnam War, 1964-65--remain to be presented, along with other aspects of a conceptual framework described in my March proposal.

GRANT PROPOSAL
 Daniel Ellsberg
 March 23, 1991

Risks and Alternatives to Militarism after Desert Storm:
 Lessons from the Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis

In August, 1990, my ongoing research and writing project on psychosocial sources of risk in military crises, focussing on the Cuban Missile Crisis and drawing both on new data and my own hitherto-unrevealed findings from my participation in the crisis and from my prior secret official study of it, was interrupted by the new crisis brought on by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and President Bush's response.

As it became plain to me in late August that Bush's strategy went beyond blockade (the first since the Missile Crisis) to preparations for and threats of invasion (comparable to those made by President Kennedy against Cuba in 1962, but this time, it seemed to me, with no element of bluff) I postponed my efforts to understand the current implications of a past crisis in favor of directly resisting the escalation of a present one.

After spending the last seven months doing everything I could think of--educating myself, addressing teach-ins, lobbying Congress, speaking at demonstrations, participating in marches and vigils, meeting with peace organizations (e.g., SANE-Freeze, the Military Families Support Network, and various ad hoc coalitions), giving interviews for print, radio and TV, several arrests for non-violent civil disobedience, and writing for publication--to avert war in the Persian Gulf and then, to end the war before it led to a US ground offensive, I now plan to spend the next several months, in part, drawing lessons from failure (my own, the peace movement's) and arguing with success (the President's).

It seems realistic and useful to describe my near-term project in these somewhat unpromising terms. I remember when I was young, at a time when America was anxious for words of hope in the early days of the Second World War, being impressed by the contrarian candor of General Stilwell when he accompanied Chinese troops emerging from Burma after being routed by the Japanese. Others were trying to put the best face on this "setback." Stilwell said, "I say we took a hell of a licking."

We have just had a hell of a setback: those of us who have worked for years--and with utmost urgency during this crisis--to encourage peaceful resolution of conflicts, who saw real prospects only a year ago that the ending of the Cold War could lead to a truly new world order and a radical shrinkage of world armaments, and who have sought--as Michael Klare once defined our long-term goal--to "undermine the cultural hegemony of militarism." (Though it is well to remember that General Stilwell's side did,

in the end, win the war.)

Even into the fall of last year--despite the President's secret preparations for an offensive war--his public espousal of sanctions, a purely defensive posture in Saudi Arabia, reliance on the UN and references to world law, along with pressure by the Soviets for a UN Military Command and by the Soviets and French for a variety of Mideast and arms control conferences, all kept alive the image of the world at a crossroads, with a real chance of moving within this very conflict along a genuinely new path, alternative to the war system. (To examine this alternative will be one of the goals of the study described below).

In January, with the reluctant approval of Congress and the UN, George Bush took the country along what is now clear was his prior commitment from the start to one of those roads, the old one. And his apparent vindication by late February means there will be no retracing of steps in the short run; it will be a while before we have as good a chance, if we ever do, for a real turning.

The struggle continues; but the cultural and psychological (as well as economic) roots of militarism in this society have just revealed their power--so ably drawn on by the President--and our own alternate values and visions have never, in my lifetime, been so openly and aggressively challenged.

The President's spectacular success in his own terms--which do not count Iraqi casualties, military or civilian, nor the near-chaotic instabilities in the region wrought by the destruction of Iraq, and which see as benefit rather than loss the exaltation of military values and armaments and the rejection of hard-won lessons of Vietnam--points toward further disdain for negotiation, exacerbation of conflicts, arms sales, embracing of friendly dictators, and further US military interventions. In one or another of the latter the lessons of Vietnam will probably be painfully regained.

In my view, the "Vietnam Syndrome" whose demise the President sought in war and now celebrates--understood as public allergy to overseas military adventures, skepticism toward official rationales, and a sense that citizen activism is legitimate and effective in averting or ending unnecessary and wrongful wars--was a national asset to be treasured, not an illness to be "kicked."

If that Vietnam Syndrome has truly been lost in the light of the Desert Storm "triumph," it is up to those of us who have opposed the arms race, intervention in Central America and this war to try to reconstruct it in our society, on a firmer, better-understood and broader basis: and to do this without the aid of disastrous new military experience.

That is a tall order. It calls for continued work of public education of the sort that burgeoned during the last seven months: teach-ins, lectures, interviews, demonstrations. These are in fact scheduled; I have been invited to participate in a number of such events already, and I shall do so.

But it calls also for reflection, research, discussion among ourselves. Rampant militarism in the spring of 1991 needs not only to be resisted, it remains to be better understood; surely we who oppose it have had our surprises in recent months, and we must work to learn from them. That too I take as my task.

Precisely in this context it seems more relevant than ever to return to the research that preoccupied me in the summer of 1990, until the guns of August in Kuwait: contemporary lessons to be drawn from the secret history of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In early October I wrote a brief memo with the heading: "The Persian Gulf Crisis of 1990: What is to be learned from the previous prewar blockade?" [attached] drawing attention to numerous generally-unremarked parallels between these two episodes, the only two cases since World War II of naval blockades accompanied by threats of air attack and invasion.

The Cuban Missile Crisis ended as a triumph for President Kennedy (to his great surprise), a triumph of intimidation. It did not result in war, as many had feared; but in retrospect the risks were real, and in some ways different and greater than the participants realized.

President Bush's very comparable strategy of intimidation in the Persian Gulf did not succeed--indeed, it now seems unlikely that he expected or even really wanted it to succeed--and the war he had been preparing for six months ensued. Yet this crisis, too, ended in a Presidential triumph, one comparable in its drama only to Kennedy's in Cuba.

Was this victory achieved without major risk? What were the risks; were they worth taking; and why did the President accept the risks he saw? Even more confidently than it seemed in October, I can say that my own data on and interpretation of the Cuban Missile Crisis throws very useful light on these currently pressing questions.

The same is true for the questions: How did Saddam Hussein see his risks before and during the confrontation; and why did he accept the risks he saw? And: how did the two courses of action interact to increase risks for the region (including ecological disaster and possible nuclear first use--in response to Iraqi chemical attack--by Israel, the UK or the United States)?

In an earlier description of my ongoing research on psychosocial sources of risk in crises, I referred to three hidden sources of risk revealed in my research: the proclivity of those in power to gamble with catastrophe rather than suffer humiliation; the readiness of subordinates to follow policies they may perceive as disastrous; and the tendency of leaders to underestimate the danger of loss of control of operations under combat conditions.

In the wake of US military triumph, the pertinence of the above sources of danger is most dramatically apparent on the side of Iraq. But unless the expressed or leaked concerns of US officials for the potentially grave risks for the US and its allies in this conflict were entirely feigned and without basis--I do not believe they were, at least for the first several months of the confrontation--the psychosocial roots of American gambling with catastrophe, and obedience, remain also relevant: as is a willingness to massacre "enemies" without great regard for the number or nature of victims, also a focus of my earlier research.

I happen to suspect that all these proclivities are related, in part, to the gender of the almost entirely male power structure. As I said in an interview in October, 1990:

"What I'm concerned about could be called ordinary male madness, especially among men of power. It has elements of recklessness, of super-sensitivity to humiliation, and--and to the end of avoiding humiliation or defeat--a willingness to kill vast numbers of people, mainly non-combatants. Unrestrained obedience is another feature of this, a willingness to do anything, no matter how reckless or murderous, in response to a command or as part of a team effort.

My own experience and study of government operations for a third of a century has led me to the disheartening conclusion that men in power may well take a high risk of killing any number of people and causing societal catastrophe rather than suffer an otherwise certain, short-run humiliation or political failure. Their own prospective loss, which they perceive as the nation's loss, of face and power and prestige, is more important to them, more real and frightening, than the risk or sacrifice of other people's lives." [East Bay Express, October 19, 1990]

It is typical of intense crises, including this one, that it is much less unrealistic than usual to regard the behavior of a particular state as if it reflected the will and personality of a single individual actor, the national leader. That means that the psychological characteristics of that leader are unusually relevant. In this case it was frequently observed that the two leaders were driven to conform to the model of masculinity known as machismo. (Private comments by leaders also revealed this

concern in the Cuban Missile Crisis and in Lyndon Johnson's decision to go to war in Vietnam). As I put it in January:

"Tom Paine said wars are caused by the pride of kings. Mid-January in the Persian Gulf, two willful men chose war. Each of them--George Bush, Saddam Hussein--preferred, and still prefers, to risk and sacrifice countless thousands of lives rather than to risk his own humiliation, rather than to seem as weak--unmanly, woman-like--or as backing off from commitments he had foolishly made.

Neither George Bush nor Saddam Hussein is a plausible champion of a "new world order." Each is, in his own way, highly representative of a very old world order: five thousand years of institutionalized male violence, machismo and militarism." [War News, Vol. One, No. 1, February 18, 1991]

Thus, I plan to explore, among other things, the factor of machismo as cultural underpinning for militarism and crisis behavior. If this is indeed, as I believe, an important factor in past and present behavior, there is an optimistic side to the finding: the potential of the "gender gap" revealed in polls during this crisis as the basis for an alternative politics. To quote myself once more:

"...it is men much more than women who are fascinated by the technology of warfare, and by the use of violence.

Women and men have a very different attitude about the idea of war as an instrument of policy, also. That's not a peculiarity of this conflict--it was true in Korea and in Vietnam. Interestingly, it was not true in World War II, which was accepted by the whole society as a necessary war. But when it comes to "optional" wars--that is, wars that are not in any real way compelled by a struggle for our national survival--there is a gender difference.

"...it's an avenue for hope. It points to a direction in which things really could change. Half our society consists of people--women--who, whether through genetics or socialization, are less fascinated by violence and by technology than the other half. And they're less inclined to believe what men in power tell them. As they strive for power and influence in society, they have a real chance to change the nature of power--to move toward a much less hierarchical, less militaristic society." [Focus Magazine, March, 1991].

Another matter draws together my earlier governmental research on patterns in crisis and some striking aspects of this latest episode. It was often commented prior to the actual onset of hostilities in this crisis that the two-person process of intimidation going on was--like the Cuban Missile Crisis--

comparable to a game of "chicken": once described by Bertrand Russell as a game characteristically played by [male] teen-aged delinquents in the US and by heads of state.

A question which I will address is: How does it come about that two heads of state find themselves--often with no prior foresight or intention of it, even days ahead--locked into such a contest? A major finding, hitherto-unpublished, from my earlier study of crises seems to apply directly here.

A particular pattern of interaction that I first analyzed in connection with the Cuban Missile Crisis, described then as the "Theory of the Fait Malaccompli" (see attached memo of September 29, 1990) seems particularly illuminating with respect to Saddam Hussein's calculations surrounding his abortive attempt to annex Kuwait by means of a fait accompli, and to President Bush's reaction to the potential this posed for a debate humiliating to himself over "Who lost Kuwait?" This interpretation, among others, has important inferences for the likelihood, circumstances and risks of further crises--and how they might be averted.

The various lessons I would draw from the two crises considered together have the potential to help this country avoid reproducing the history subsequent to Kennedy's success in 1962, which led, in less than two years, to a fateful attempt by the same cast of officials to repeat that triumph in the Tonkin Gulf, the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam.

I propose to spend the next four months--in addition to continued public speaking and education on the political implications of the Persian Gulf War--on producing a book-length analysis, to be published either as a book or as a series of articles. I will address the themes described above, among others, bearing on the factors encouraging the dangerous, violent course taken in this and past crises and the potential and incentives for an alternative approach in the future: if there is to be a human future.

FAITS MALACCOMPLIS AND THE ORIGINS OF CRISIS

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A Preliminary Research Note from the Project: "Risks and Alternatives to Militarism After Desert Storm: Lessons from the Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis," funded through the CPS/NA and the Agape Foundation.

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FAITS MALACCOMPLIS AND THE ORIGINS OF CRISIS

Introduction

A number of apparently dissimilar international crises share a common origin: the partly unsuccessful or failed attempt by the leader of one state to confront an opponent or ally or a sector of his own society with a fait accompli: what one might call a fait malaccompli.

From this attempt, and its failure, a remarkable number of standard consequences flow with relatively high probability, so that these particular crises (which tend rarely to be examined together because of their disparities in other respects) show a rich collection of similarities when compared in detail.

Moreover, these common features, examined together for a particular crisis, show an inner coherence, a logic, that betrays causal relationships; there seems to be a basis for a theory of this sub-class of crises. Yet these relationships seem ill-understood by the experienced "crisis managers" in the various governments; for these incidents are generally accompanied by shocking surprises--on both sides--at the time, and by persistent puzzlement afterwards.

The tactical goal of producing a fait accompli--the effort to surprise a well-informed and powerful state, so that it is unready to respond quickly and effectively to a move against its own interests, thereby dissuading it from responding at all--imposes severe tactical requirements, so that the "moves" and circumstances leading up to the overt crises in this class almost inevitably show many similarities: totally unremarked elsewhere, so far as I have been able to discover. What is even less recognized--either by observers or by participants, at the time or later--is the causal impact of many of these features upon the later course of events: above all if the effort fails, in some degree.

An analysis seems called for--to my knowledge, none exists in print. [yet, over 25 years since I wrote the first version of these notes]--of the incentives and pressures that generate attempted faits accomplis, the problems of achieving them, and the risks to which they give rise in succeeding or failing.

It is the aim of the fait accompli to make a threatening situation seem inescapable or unchangeable rather than urgent:

to induce withdrawal, acceptance, rationalization, change of goal, paralysis, disintegration, vacillation, passivity, rather than a sense of determination or "crisis," with its frantic exploration of alternatives and possible overtones of hysteria, panic and aggression, encouraging violence.

Yet it is in the nature of a fait accompli, if it fails to achieve passive acceptance by an opponent--that is, if it fails to succeed--to produce a "crisis." For if secrecy is maintained until the closing stages of the move, but the opponent on becoming alerted at last is not convinced that the change is beyond his influencing, he is then in an urgent decision-making situation with a short deadline, that is, a crisis.

Moreover, the hurried, stressful, and disorderly process of crisis decisionmaking--combined with a sense of desperation, and possibly with an intense resentment at having been put in this situation, especially by a process of deceit--is more likely than more leisurely and less fraught decisionmaking to result in radical, violent countermoves which are in turn surprising and crisis-producing for the original actor.

We will be examining below the circumstances to which the tactics of the fait accompli are adapted, the calculations on which an attempted fait accompli are based, and the tactics involved in the effort.

But since the possible failure of this attempt can be so risky, it is especially important to try to understand why this failure occurs so often, so violently, and so surprisingly to the initiator, as it does. In particular, we will consider how factors intrinsic to the tactics contribute to the likelihood, the intensity, and the lack of anticipation of its failure.

The form of failure we shall examine in particular is one in which secrecy and deception are effective as long, or almost as long, as originally intended, but in which the opponent--precisely because that secrecy and deception have led him to make commitments, predictions or reassurances that have now made him politically vulnerable--instead of accepting the situation, strives to rise to the occasion and acts angrily and violently to counter or punish the move. That is at the heart of the story of Kennedy's response to the Soviet missiles in Cuba, and George Bush's response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Failure of a Fait Accompli as a "Crisis"

An action against the interests (or preference or desire or policy) of another party may have some more or less well-defined interval of vulnerability, during which it can be opposed or counteracted with relative ease and effectiveness, but after

which it cannot. For one drawn to such an action, the problem presents itself: How to prevent any sort of response by the opposing party during this vulnerable period so that, if and when it eventually contemplates opposition, it confronts alternatives that are all relatively ineffective, costly, or risky: a prospect--it is hoped--that will discourage it from reacting at all.

One way to understand the operational goals of a fait accompli is to conceive it as aimed at producing a change in the status quo, against the interests of another state, without creating a crisis for the opposing leaders.

In this context, we may think of a "crisis" as an urgent search by policymakers for means to influence or prevent a threatening, undesired change. An energetic search presupposes some hope of success in finding an adequate solution.

The fait accompli is intended to abort this search, by confronting the opposing decisionmakers, not with a challenge, but with a hopeless situation: one in which their interests are damaged but which they are powerless to restore to the old status quo, or which they can oppose only with measures that seem obviously too risky, too costly, or too ineffective to be worth considering.

Success in the fait accompli consists in (a) convincing the opposing leadership--despite their surprise, shock, disappointment, and their consciousness of suffering a serious setback--that it is hopeless or clearly unprofitable even to try to reverse the damaging move, and (b) to convince them of this immediately or very quickly, before the urgent and serious search for effective action that constitutes a crisis fully develops.

Indeed, if the opposing leaders arrive quickly at this conclusion, they can be expected to try to reduce the domestic political consequences of the national reverse for themselves, by deprecating the significance of the move, or their right to oppose it, or even by interpreting it as a desirable change: thus, no challenge to them nor a "crisis" for their nation.

If, on the contrary, they do define it as a crisis--even internally, encouraging their staffs to look for ways and to mobilize means to counter it--and especially if they do so publicly and actually mount opposition, the tactic of the fait accompli has to some degree failed.

Bob Woodward's account, in his recent book The Commanders (New York, 1991, pp. 228-238), of the initial discussions in the Bush Administration of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait shows decision-makers in the process of deciding whether or not the move--already completed militarily by the time of the first NSC

meeting--should or should not be seen and accepted as a successful fait accompli.

The Chairman of the JCS General Colin Powell "had watched Bush carefully, and he did think it was at all clear what the President was going to do or whether he would accept the loss of Kuwait."

Powell's own view, expressed to Secretary of Defense Cheney, was that it would be "hard" to reverse it: "They were dealing with a huge, instant invasion that was now over and complete. Saddam's initial mission was accomplished." Powell ~~dismissed~~ rejected all the immediate, "half-baked" proposals for action.

Likewise, the budget director, Richard Darman, told the President: "Given what Schwarzkopf had presented, the invasion of Kuwait was accomplished, and he didn't see how it was possible to eliminate Iraqi oil from the market," which would require a military blockade. The assessments by Powell and Darman were clearly along the lines that Saddam Hussein had hoped to achieve, and presumably had expected. And they were in a clear majority.

"'But we just can't accept what's happened in Kuwait just because it's too hard to do anything about it,' Bush said," in answer to Darman. At this point--a little after 8 AM on the morning of August 2, the first NSC meeting on the Iraqi attack--Saddam Hussein's tactics of fait accompli, though carried out impeccably as he had planned, had begun to fail: in their crucial aim of precluding a Middle East crisis.

For the moment, the President was joined in his definition of the situation as a problem, a challenge--a crisis rather than a fait accompli--only by his National Security Assistant, General Brent Scowcroft: "'Mr. President, Scowcroft said, I think you and I are the only ones who really are exercised about this.'"

But--as the first meeting of the NSC during the Cuban Missile Crisis also demonstrated--it does not take more than the President to see things this way for the government, shortly, to be in crisis. (Just why George Bush, almost alone, might have reacted this way, we will consider below).

The next morning at the next meeting of the NSC, by agreement with the President, Scowcroft made the case for both of them: "'We have got to examine what the long-term interests are for this country and for the Middle East if the invasion and taking of Kuwait become an accomplished fact. We have to begin our deliberations with the fact that this is unacceptable. Yes, it's hard to do much. There are lots of reasons why we can't do things but it's our job." (Italics added.)

Others quickly got the message. "Wolfowitz thought Scowcroft had, right then, changed the entire focus... Darman felt that Scowcroft's introduction was a plea for the cabinet to unify, to fall in line. The President indicated that he agreed with his national security adviser... Bush said that he wanted Cheney, Powell and Schwarzkopf at Camp David the next day to brief him on the military options." The crisis was on.

Theory of the Fait Accompli

The goal of bringing about a change against the interests of another party without creating a sense of crisis, or a major attempt at response in that party, accounts for the dominant tactics of the fait accompli: speed, secrecy, and deception.

These three characteristics aim at producing a surprise for the opponent. And this aim is related to the need, in the period preceding revelation of the surprise, to reduce or hold down to a low level, his state of alert and mobilization, thus his readiness to respond effectively in time.

The basis for these requirements is that: (a) states (like all big organizations) take a significantly long time to respond to a perceived threat or change in the environment; (b) the length of this time depends on many factors of "readiness" and alert status, which depend on (c) the prior expectations of decision-makers, which (d) can be manipulated by opposing actions and declarations and the manner in which the action is prepared and carried out.

Another aim should be to prevent the opponent from publicly committing himself to respond vigorously to prevent such a change, or from otherwise acting in ways that increase his incentives to respond. As we shall see, this aim is frequently neglected or mismanaged, leading to failure of the fait accompli and to crisis. Indeed, the very tactics used to produce the effect above can have--as in the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Persian Gulf Crisis of 1990--the perverse consequence of encouraging a commitment or otherwise increasing the victim's political embarrassment if he should fail to respond.

Before addressing these sources and effects of failure, however, let us consider the circumstances that motivate such tactics.

Now, it is not always useful to postpone an opponent's response to one's action by misleading him and encouraging unreadiness. If it is, it must be because the situation that the opponent will confront at a later stage of one's operation will appear more discouraging to counteraction than it would have

appeared at an earlier stage, or than it would if the opponent had been ready to act more promptly.

This is not always the case. Though it may be hard to respond, it may be no harder to respond late than early; or, the change, appearing suddenly and unequivocally in an advanced state, may appear more threatening than if it had emerged gradually; or, the tactics of speed, secrecy and deception accompanying the move may in themselves be regarded as highly provocative. This last possibility, which we shall discuss at length, seems often to be underestimated by those contemplating a fait accompli.

Circumstances in which it is useful to delay opposing action can usually be described in the following terms: there is a vulnerable stage (Phase I) in the sequence of preparations and moves leading to the intended change in the status quo, during which the opponent could block or deter or reverse the development relatively easily, cheaply, and risklessly, with means at his disposal, if he were aware of the development and could make his decisions and employ these means fast enough, within the vulnerable period. 4

But if his awareness can be delayed, or his reactions slowed, or the period of vulnerability compressed relative to his reaction time, a state of affairs may arise (Phase II) in which the actions that would have been effective earlier would no longer promise decisive results, and there are in the new situation no alternative cheap, easy, or unrisky measures that look effective.

There is simply no point in going to the trouble of compressing to the utmost one's preparations for a move, of keeping them secret, or misleading an opponent into a state of unreadiness, unless these tactics aimed at delaying any response are going to make it significantly harder for the opponent to respond at all, or less likely that he will respond violently or effectively.

The circumstances that recommend an attempt at a fait accompli must be such that the chances of an effective response seem to be lowered significantly by preventing any early response. This is a matter of judgment, and in the historic cases of faits accomplis to be considered, some observers of the attempts might disagree that they fitted these circumstances.

Nevertheless, we can assume that the initiators of an actual attempt have focused their attention upon the high vulnerability of their actions in the earlier phase and (perhaps mistakenly) have deprecated, relatively, both their vulnerability in the later phases of the move and the provocativeness of the tactics.

In the classic case of the military fait accompli the move in question is a movement of troops across national frontiers to occupy territory: like Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in the early morning hours of August 2, 1990.

During the phase of preparations for this movement, it might be blocked by mobilization, redeployment, or a higher state of alert within the victim's territory (or even, at more risk, by a limited preemptive attack).

In the case of the deployment of missiles to Cuba, the move could have been blocked relatively easily before the missiles arrived by a naval blockade. This is what the Soviets feared, if they had announced their program rather than attempting a fait accompli.

Furthermore, the movement of troops (or missiles) might be deterred by explicit warnings, threats, and commitments of violent retaliation; or by appeals to and commitments by third parties which could take the form of deploying forces to the threatened territory--e.g., in 1990, US troops to Kuwait, or to Saudi Arabia; or by arousing world public opinion or even opposing factions within the aggressor's country. All of these moves would be aimed at producing inhibiting counterpressures within the aggressor's alliances, public or its government, that could lead its leaders to abandon the attempt.

Likewise, during the actual movement of troops across the border, they may be vulnerable to flanking attacks that would disorganize them or cut them off, or to air attacks upon the advancing column or upon their supporting elements and supply train. Moreover, if the defender is ready to respond promptly at all, he may have good terrain in which to exploit the advantages of the defense.

These conditions during, first, the stage of planning and preparation and, second, the early implementation of the movement or attempted change, together define Phase I. But it may often be helpful to distinguish these two subphases--as IA and IB--since they do differ in the degree of vulnerability, the ease of countering them and hence the willingness of an opponent to do so on less-than-certain intelligence.

If, however, in an unalerted and unready state, the defender is not occupying this good defensive terrain at all, or is quickly pushed out of it, it may be the attacker who can move into and develop the high ground, the river line, or the coastal frontier (commencing Phase II).

As time goes on, and he moves troops and supplies, digs in and develops the defenses, it is he who enjoys the possession of defenses, the general advantages of defense; nor does he offer

his opponent the opportunity to catch him unawares. Moreover, his surprise move may have achieved this situation relatively bloodlessly, minimizing the provocation of the move itself.

It may be evident, moreover, that to force him out of the position attained, in his alerted and defensive position, would not only be costly for the attacker, but could be achieved only by inflicting great loss of life upon the aggressor's forces, a challenge which would "force" him to respond strongly. 6

He is, in short, observably committed to defending the "new status quo." As time goes on this degree of commitment (which was minimal in the earliest stages of the aggressive movement) increases still further, as does the "legitimacy," de facto, of the new status quo.

The distinction between the two major phases has rarely been put more clearly than in Bob Woodward's recent paraphrase, based on interviews, of the early thinking of General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on the difference between a US military objective limited to defending Saudi Arabia following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait--i.e., accepting the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait as a successful fait accompli--and the military goal of attempting to undo that occupation.

"It was one thing to stop Saddam from going into other countries like Saudi Arabia; it was very much another thing to reverse an invasion that was accomplished. In military terms, it was night and day. A defense of Saudi Arabia might be accomplished without a fight. Schwarzkopf had told Bush that it would take 8 to 12 months to build US forces up to a level adequate to kick Saddam out of Kuwait. Reversing an invasion was probably the most difficult military task imaginable..." (The Commanders, New York, 1991, p. 261)

It must be kept in mind that the class of cases we are describing here are not, typically, military operations aimed at the destruction or surrender of the opposing state--as in the above example of the occupation of Kuwait--but aimed rather at the acceptance by the opposing state of a limited loss of its territorial integrity or a limited setback to its interests.

However, on a larger scale (as in the case of Kuwait), the same considerations might arise in the process of destroying a sovereign state by surprise attack, when it is important to discourage intervention by allies or third parties.

The pattern appears, in the small, in its classic form in Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland, and on the larger scale, in his carrying out of the Anschluss with Austria, his occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia after the Munich agreement, and his Blitzkrieg attacks upon Poland, Norway, the Lowlands, and

France. Although none of these, except the Rhineland, was limited with respect to the individual victim nation, a major consideration in each was to discourage its allies from carrying out their obligations and third parties from intervening. This also applied to the North Korean attack in 1950; and Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait in 1990.

Likewise, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor fitted the classic pattern of the limited military fait accompli. Similarly, the attack of the Israelis into the Sinai Peninsula, and the simultaneous British and French operation along the Suez Canal in 1956, although the object in this case was not ultimately to hold territory or to exploit a defensive position. Finally, surprise and deception were used in the abortive invasion of the Bay of Pigs in 1961, to give heavily outmanned forces a chance to establish a beachhead long enough for hoped-for political developments (and, perhaps, to justify U.S. direct support).

The Soviet establishment of a large military base and missile sites in-Cuba in August to October, 1962, was in no sense "aggression," but as a move certain to inspire opposition it did present in classic form the two-phase character (or three-phase, distinguishing two parts of Phase I) that recommend the tactics of a fait accompli.

Disclosures during the preparations for the move (Phase IA) could have resulted in political, diplomatic, and economic countermeasures, and more significant, even more powerful domestic pressures upon the President to resist the move than by a blockade. Moreover, pressures could have been brought to bear on the Cubans to change their mind about accepting the move.

Although the Soviet commitment was considerably increased and the effectiveness of protest or blockade progressively reduced as Soviet personnel and equipment actually arrived in Cuba (Phase IB), the installation was still relatively vulnerable to air attack prior to the achievement of operational status by the SAM system or by individual missile sites. And a blockade could prevent the arrival of all the possible, including perhaps any of the longer-range IRBMs, and prevent the arrival of any or some of the nuclear warheads.

Phase II would distinctly have arrived, however, once the equipment, including IRBMs, war heads and fuel, had all arrived, the SAM system including its communications was fully operational, and at least some of the MRBMs were in an alert, operational status. No longer would a selected military blockade have had any significance whatever, nor could a limited "surgical" attack reliably eliminate the offensive capability. A limited attack could only serve as a demonstration; and against operational missiles, a significantly dangerous one, risking an unauthorized launch of a nuclear missile against the US.

The remaining alternatives, other than mere protest or the offer of negotiations and trades, (which would have meant success for the move) would have been a full blockade, a long process of questionable effectiveness and highly controversial within our Alliances; an air attack upon a very large target system with high collateral damage and the risk of significant local or global counteraction (including unauthorized nuclear launch); and/or an invasion.

The Soviet move itself could not be regarded as aggression, although this label was in fact used rather freely by the U.S. Government. On the contrary, the Soviet need for the tactics of a fait accompli was to prevent U.S. counteractions that could themselves be regarded as aggressive, against a Soviet move that was not only unquestionably legal in terms of international law but had very strong precedent in US behavior, including the deployment of comparable missiles to the borders of the Soviet Union in Turkey that same year.

However, there are interesting similarities to this case in the episodes of the Rhineland and the Anschluss. In each of these cases, the character of the military move as "aggression" was considerably ambiguous, a fact which definitely slowed the reactions of at least some third parties.

The Requirements and Consequences of Secrecy and Deception

6 For the fait accompli to be attractive, there must be an adequately high chance of achieving a situation in which even certainty in the opponent's mind of the state of affairs or of event to come--that is, even full disclosure, the eventual loss of secrecy--is not enough to move the opponent to counteraction.

7 All of this discussion has focused on the possibility and the motives of decisive counteraction, but there are three other sorts of responses to warning that the initiator of the fait accompli must prevent.

a. Alerts, increases in readiness, preparatory moves that lower the costs or risks or increase the effectiveness of later countermoves that might be undertaken in response to further warning. In effect, such alerting moves destroy the two-phase pattern by making it roughly as easy to block late moves in the sequence as early ones.

b. Measures to improve warning; increases in collection, transmission or analysis of information. These make it more difficult for the initiator to preserve secrecy "long enough," that is, throughout Phase 1, the stage of high vulnerability.

And they increase the likelihood of alerting and mobilization measures (above), which may be undertaken even on the basis of relatively equivocal and uncertain warning.

c. Commitments to counteraction, or potentially embarrassing predictions or reassurances by opposing state leaders (e.g., indicating to their public or allies their confidence that the move actually being planned in secret will not occur) that make it less easy for the opponent to avoid taking even costly or dangerous counteraction, given sufficiently unequivocal evidence of the move.

One of the most important crisis patterns to be analyzed--a pattern, as it happens, of miscalculation on both sides--is that the very secrecy and deception intended by the initiator of the fait accompli to prevent effective countermoves, increases in readiness, or increased reconnaissance and warning capability have the undesired and unanticipated effect of encouraging commitments or unwise predictions or assurances--which are thought wrongly to be risk-free or low risk, under the influence of deception--which make eventual radical counteraction much more likely, or inevitable. These were, respectively, key elements in the emergence of a Cuban Missile Crisis and of the Iraq Crisis of 1990.

Moreover, because the nature and impact of these commitments may not be well understood by foreign analysts, and the degree to which they actually tie the hands of national leaders may be heavily discounted or unnoticed abroad, the occurrence of these commitments may not serve as danger signals to the initiator of the fait accompli that his tactics are in trouble.

This seems to have been true for the Soviets, confronting JFK's warnings, "too late" in September 1962; and for Saddam Hussein in 1990, confronting frequent though equivocal "leaks" that President Bush's assertion that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait "will not stand" represented, for him, a strong commitment to reverse it by military means, sooner rather than later, rather than waiting for economic sanctions to take effect, as his public statements continued to suggest.

Of course, to divide complex sequences of events sharply into a small number of phases is artificial; yet, in these situations, the notion of abrupt and significant changes in state, discontinuous shifts in vulnerability, seems less artificial as an abstraction than the alternative notion of smooth variation.

A border is crossed with uniformed troops; missiles arrive at a port, and then at sites; a position is occupied and a defensive perimeter established; an air defense system goes operational, with radars turned on, missiles armed and fueled,

communications working, the system manned with experienced operators.

None of these happenings is strictly a point in time--they all have some duration, with some vagueness and arbitrariness at their edges--yet they are all events that can be located relatively precisely on a time dimension, and they tend to make a sharp difference. After they happen, things are not the same.

To recapitulate: before events have reached one of these turning points, relatively cheap or riskless actions would be effective in deterring or blocking later stages of the move, whereas in what we are calling Phase 2 no such "easy" countermoves, including these, would be effective.

Even in Phase 1, though the appropriate countermoves would be cheap, they would not be free, or totally without risk; they would not be undertaken unless necessary. Typically, they would not be undertaken unless there was some degree of expectation, some subjective probability in the minds of the leaders of the opposing state, that an unfavorable change in the status quo might be planned or underway.

But given their relatively low cost, risk, or degree of commitment--especially in the earliest parts of Phase I (we might call this Phase 1A), even a fairly low probability of this might be enough to trigger these early blocking, deterring, or alerting moves.

Thus there is a high premium on extreme secrecy in this earliest phase of planning and preparation. Discussion and knowledge is limited to a relatively tiny group of officials, mostly very high-level with very little participation by staff aides or regional experts: a form of "internal summitry."

Extraordinary procedures may be adopted to prevent "leaks," either domestic or to foreign intelligence; high officials may do their own typing, and operational units may avoid radio or telephone messages that could be picked up. (The Soviets managed to keep the internal movements of the missiles to Soviet ports and the sea passage to Cuba entirely secret--to a degree that US intelligence would have estimated to be simply impossible--by using only couriers and landlines for communication.)

But in the interest of keeping expectations of the coming moves so low in the target country so low that even special alerting or intelligence collection efforts are excluded, there is an incentive to mislead the leaders, staffs and intelligence apparatus of the target not only by measures of concealment but by explicit, persuasive deception: lies, or assurances so artfully misleading that they will be recollected as lies, in retrospect, by their recipients.

The same is true in the later stages of Phase I (we might call this Phase 1B), though for different reasons. At this point, effective countermoves may still be available but at a cost or risk high enough that they would not be undertaken unless they were almost surely needed. They are regarded as so serious--for instance, ultimatums, mobilization (this costly prospect was crucial in slowing--till "too late"--the willingness of the French to block Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland), shifts in alliances, drastic changes in basic policies, blockade, or major military deployments or even attacks--that a high false alarm rate could not be tolerated. These costs will be reflected in a requirement in the target state for a high degree of probability that the unfavorable development is at hand before these actions will be undertaken. 9

deception
So far as secrecy is concerned, then, the requirement is less stringent for the initiator of the fait accompli in Phase 1B than earlier. Whereas during Phase 1A secrecy must be almost absolute, in Phase 1B he need not avert all suspicion as to his intention or actions, but merely prevent the opponent from attaining anything close to near-certainty. Yet even this may become difficult, for in this later stage, it may become harder and harder to rely on concealment alone for the requisite secrecy. @

As discussions and plans and early steps give way to coherent operations and movements, observable signs become more noticeable and less ambiguous, or perhaps, more ominously ambiguous from the point of view of the target country. And with more and more individuals and agencies knowledgeable and active, the chance of plausible leaks increases.

Toward the end of Phase I, even to maintain an effective margin of doubt in the opponent's mind in the face of growing indications pointing to the actual intent, it may seem essential to reiterate denials or misleading assertions as authoritatively and persuasively as possible: i.e., again, to lie, or deliberately to mislead. (Here lies a crucial danger of the tactics, one generally underestimated, as we shall shortly examine). J

Eventually, the time will almost surely come when the opponent does "know for a fact" what is about to happen, or what has already occurred. If at this moment, not having acted sooner, the intended victim finds counteraction compelling, and takes it, despite its costs and risks for both parties, then the only effect of the tactics of fait accompli has been to delay the confrontation and to contrive that it should take place on a higher level of violence. This represents a considerable failure of the tactics, regardless of the eventual outcome.

Likewise, as I have suggested earlier, the tactics have suffered a relative failure if the opponent even seriously considers such countermoves--especially in full view of the public--i.e., if a decisionmaking "crisis" results in which these radical countermoves have a significantly high probability of emerging. What is desired is the opponent's recognition that even radical and violent countermoves would be ineffective, or very excessively costly or risky, and for this conclusion to be reached so quickly and so confidently such moves get no real consideration.

At this point in the discussion we can see why it is that a near-success in a fait accompli, that is, a near miss, can be more dangerous for the initiator than a total failure. A total failure might consist of the opponent getting his wind up very early in the game, proceeding to block subsequent moves by simply increasing his readiness or warning measures or by making commitments, all at a fairly low level of international tension.

Alternatively, the initiator might have made a major miscalculation, overlooking a simple effective and relatively non-violent, non-risky countermove which the opponent employs without hesitation even late in the sequence.

A much more dangerous mistake is to have calculated correctly that the opponent, perceiving the threat late in the game, will find only violent risky countermoves worth considering, but to have underestimated his willingness nevertheless to use these moves.

Another dangerous failure in a several-phase situation is for the secrecy of the operation to fail, alerting the opponent, not in Phase IA where non-violent blocking measures would be adequate, but in Phase IB, when near-certainty is enough to move the opponent to the violent counteraction necessary (whereas Phase II would have been a safe harbor for the initiator, if the opponent could have been kept highly uncertain just a bit longer).

What makes attempts at a fait accompli highly relevant to a study of crises is the frequency with which intense crises are, in fact, brought on by just these sorts of late-Phase I (Phase IB) failures of secrecy; or else, in which the target of the attempted fait accompli is moved to undertake a strong punitive or offensive counteraction in Phase II despite its great cost or risk or even apparent hopelessness. Indeed, if the first sort of failure of secrecy and deception occurs, it is common for the second to occur as well--a failure of the deceived party to be subsequently deterred from retaliation--and that is not by coincidence.

The frequency with which these failures occur jointly needs explaining, as does the fact that the opponent's response to this failed attempt comes so frequently as a wholly unforeseen and shocking surprise to the initiator. An explanation, I believe, rests on the effects of the prior (now failed) secrecy and deception on the domestic and personal--as well as international--status of the targeted leader, and on his (virtually always male) emotions as well as his view of "national interest."

13

Deceit, Humiliation, and Male Rage

The pattern we are addressing is that each of two powerful states has surprised the other: one in attempting a fait accompli, the other by its response. (Surprisingly, these surprises occur for experienced leaders, each of whom has large, experienced staffs and intelligence apparatuses dedicated to averting such surprises). It may be precisely this pair of surprising challenges that constitutes the crisis, the danger, for one or often both of the states (and perhaps for many others in the world).

The simple proposition that one dangerous, unpleasant, challenging surprise often leads to another seems not to be generally recognized or well-understood by these leaders or staffs. Indeed, that ignorance seems to be why the pattern recurs so frequently.

Those who set out to construct a ~~construct~~ a surprise for another national leader or state seem generally to underestimate the uncertainty of the response to their move: more specifically, the likelihood that it will itself be unpleasantly surprising.

When one looks at the motives, in the intended subject of a fait accompli, for that surprising--often aggressive, violent, dangerous--response, one often finds them rooted in the very fact of surprise and in the measures--typically, involving deception--that were necessary to achieve it.

There is a sense in the responding leader not only that he and his nation have been endangered--in a way that calls for fast (often unconventional, violent, ordinarily-forbidden) action to protect his own and the nation's interests--but that he has been deceived, fooled, doubled-crossed, embarrassed, made a fool of, treated with disrespect ("dissed," in ghetto language) in a way that calls for revenge (even at some risk to other interests).

In any case--he feels--it calls for violent, bold, risk-taking behavior aimed at embarrassing or humiliating the other in order to restore his own dignity: as well as the "national honor."

If such motivation sounds archtypically masculine, it is not by chance: the anarchic international system rewards with leadership those men who feel specially sensitive to the demands of a code of machismo.

Described in these terms, the nature of the response might seem understandable enough to be easily predictable; yet it does not seem, in fact, to be commonly predicted. Leaders who are themselves subject to such motivational pressures, and know they are, still frequently (though not always) fail to foresee them in other leaders. There is a common failure of empathy here, among men of power, and their staffs: which leads precisely to dangerous crises.

What I seem to have discovered (a quarter of a century ago) is a common and dangerous failing of state leaders to appreciate certain dangers of deception and secrecy; the full extent of the risks of undertaking to deceive and surprise powerful political actors (which may include their own legislatures or publics).

These men of power are misled, in part, by their own esoteric knowledge, unshared by the "laity," of the frequency with which secrecy and deception can be successfully achieved, long enough to be powerfully effective.

Their own past successes--and their domination of their immediate "court"--blind them to the commonplace wisdom that it is dangerous to set out to humiliate a state leader: who usually controls significant destructive capability by virtue of his role, even though its use against a more powerful opponent might entail self-destruction.

That might seem self-evident; yet the humiliation of an opponent is not infrequently a fundamental goal of policy, either tacitly (as in the Cuban Missile Crisis) or with startling explicitness, as George Bush proclaimed with respect to Saddam Hussein.

This usually arises in pursuit of revenge, i.e., retaliation for one's own humiliation--actual, potential, or attempted--either by the person one is trying to humiliate in turn, or--very commonly, perhaps even generally--by some other person, more powerful or less vulnerable, against whom it is inexpedient to seek revenge and for whom the current target is a scapegoat.

What seems often to lead to crises is that in the effort to produce a fait accompli--where the primary motive is not to humiliate anyone (but, perhaps, to avert one's own humiliating failure)--a leader totally ignores or greatly underrates the inadvertently humiliating effect of the secrecy and deception that are instrumental to the approach, on others who are taken

in, or fooled, by it. These others may be either the main target of the deception, or in some cases allies or others who are incidentally deceived by it and proceed to get out on a limb.

These victims are then subject to feelings of rage and desire for retaliation that are strongly motivational, spurring them to consider quick and violent countermeasures that--given their cost and danger or tabu status--would not normally be considered as appropriate responses to the "objective" challenge, if one abstracted from "the way it was done," the disrespectful, humiliating challenge to (male) personal dignity.

Of course, a national leader who discovers that he has been seriously fooled will feel that the implications of such a challenge, such disrespectful behavior, go beyond its immediate effects on his personal feelings. And he is right. Both the behavior displayed toward himself, and the public display of his own credulity, threaten his authority--his image and prestige in the eyes of the public, the legislature, his own subordinates and subordinate agencies--and his influence within the executive branch, his own society, and with the nation's allies and the international system.

Thus, his general influence and effectiveness are at stake, along with his own ability to stay in power. More than that: he will feel, and to some extent he will be right, that the danger can even extend to the power of the nation in the international system, and to national security.

Insulted leaders and their courtiers in and out of government commonly claim such transcendent implications in justifying their taking such slights seriously and responding violently. These claims tend to be sincere; indeed, power-holders commonly have trouble distinguishing sharply between their own narrow, short-run personal interests and the interests of society at large. But there is also some objective substance---as well as nonsense--in these beliefs, which their own experience of governmental affairs tends to confirm.

An unexpectedly aggressive, dangerous response may be the enraged, violent, humiliation-seeking response of an intended target of a fait accompli, who has inadvertently and unexpectedly been made to feel humiliated and politically endangered by having been successfully deceived.

Failing to foresee this possible effect or to take measures to reduce it, the perpetrator underrates the risks of his course, a factor which encourages him to undertake it, and then in turn causes him to be surprised by the reaction. That reaction (which may, incidentally, by another fait accompli: as in the case of Kennedy's blockade of Cuba) constitutes a crisis for himself,

encouraging him in turn to escape it by means that produce crises for others...

There is here, evidently, the potential for an escalating chain of crisis, with a cycle of humiliation at its heart, launched and maintained by failures of empathy: a lack of desire to humiliate but a failure to foresee it, or else to care sufficiently, to imagine empathetically the possible response to it by "putting oneself in the place" of a ("lesser," perhaps despised) opponent.

Cycles of Humiliation and Crisis in Cuba: Sketch of a Case Study

The origins of such a cycle may extend far back beyond a particular crisis: indeed, any specification of an "origin" is largely arbitrary. Here, for example, is a sketch of such a cycle in Cuba that covers no more than thirty years...

We start, arbitrarily, in the early 'Thirties (not to go back to the last century). The US-supported regime of Batista in Cuba--like its predecessors and like neo-colonial regimes elsewhere--is experienced widely in Cuba, and above all by aspiring professionals and idealistic nationalists like Castro and Che Guevara (like Ho Chi Minh and Giap in Indochina, or Gandhi in South Africa and India)--as a prolonged experience of humiliation and insult, to their fathers and mothers and to themselves.

That is not, in general, the conscious intent of foreign rulers or their local proxies, but it is almost universally the subjective reality of the situation for the local people, and especially for those aspiring to professional careers or to political leadership: one that is little appreciated as a reality or an effective factor by the rulers from beginning to the end of their regime.

The committed, costly, prolonged, dangerous nationalist revolutionary struggle that ensues--in Cuba as elsewhere, in Nicaragua, Indochina, China, Angola (or East Europe, Afghanistan)--is fueled at least as much by this sense of humiliation and desire for personal and national vindication and dignity as by the reality of material exploitation.

But Castro's eventual victory (like that of the Sandinistas, later) is felt by the whole society of the former hegemonic power, and especially its governing elites, as, in turn, a humiliation: both an embarrassing failure and a contraction of their influence, their prestige and authority internationally. This effect is not exactly unwelcome to the newly triumphant revolutionary regime, but it was not a primary goal, and the dangers it poses were and remain (for a while) underestimated.

It becomes a US goal--covertly--to rollback Cuba's independence: but also to retaliate for Castro's "impudence," his lack of deference, his defiance.

The Bay of Pigs, which seeks not only to overthrow his regime but to assassinate Castro, ends instead in a dramatic humiliation for the US President personally. Publicly, he accepts responsibility, shows "wisdom," takes the loss philosophically and withdraws from the effort to intervene.

Privately, JFK and his brother are enraged, develop an obsession with vindication, act, in the words of his Secretary of Defense, "hysterical" about Castro. They set in motion the largest covert program in history against him: the head of which states explicitly at the outset and thereafter that only US invasion can ultimately accomplish the aim of the program, overthrow of Castro by October, 1962.

All diplomatic and operational preparations for invasion are made during 1962, openly exercised, with final preparations, in great secrecy, ordered during October.

Both Castro and Khrushchev see all this, having penetrated the covert campaign and witnessing the exercises. In a way totally unimagined by any US officials, even those few who were aware of the existence of the covert programs, or by American analysts for more than a generation afterwards, Khrushchev foresees this impending "loss of Cuba" as an intense prospective humiliation, threatening his and Soviet prestige and influence throughout the Communist and Third World and even his maintenance of power.

What JFK and RFK see as an attempt to rectify their own humiliation by Castro is seen in the spring of 1962 by Khrushchev as a prospect that will endanger and humiliate him: and he searches, desperately, for a way out. (The "loss of Cuba" would cap a whole year of humiliations and frustrations: Kennedy's "calling his bluff" on the missile gap and on his threats on Berlin and East Germany; Kennedy's and McNamara's open discussion of possible nuclear first-strikes in the event of conflict, based on their announced nuclear superiority; and various challenges by China and others, even by Castro in Cuba. The first two of these, as it happens, involved speeches by Gilpatric and McNamara that I myself drafted).

Khrushchev conceives of a way of saving Cuba and simultaneously "turning the tables" against the US in a whole variety of spheres, by the secret deployment of Soviet missiles to Cuba. That this abrupt change in the international status quo, boldly ("impudently", provocatively) asserting, acting on

and achieving a status of equality with the US, would amount to a humiliating reversal for the US and specifically for its current leaders, could hardly be missed by the Soviet decision-makers. Indeed, the most experienced among them, such as Mikoyan and Gromyko, have sharp misgivings; but they do not press them to the limit.

Yet Khrushchev himself, imposing his will without much resistance to it, does seem to miss entirely what the meaning of that consequence might be, in terms of the vigor and aggressiveness of the US response and its effects on the Soviets and himself. This despite the fact that he himself is responding to a prospective humiliation.

How could this be? My first answer is to point out that this failure falls within a well-established historical pattern; this is what national leaders in this situation commonly do, this is what to expect from the "hidden history" of international crises. Khrushchev is acting "normally" in his failure to take account, or adequate account, of this effect of his actions. At this point I am much more confident in pointing to the existence of this phenomenon, and its importance, than I am in attempting to explain it.

One might conjecture, however, adapting the perspective of depth psychology, a largely unconscious, only partly acknowledged satisfaction in the prospect of his antagonist's "embarrassment" or even humiliation: failing, wishfully, in unconscious pursuit of this "secondary" or unacknowledged aim, to admit into his awareness the full scale of this prospective humiliation, the likelihood of retaliation, and the resulting dangers for his own program and himself.

In this way, it may be, the prospect "I'm going to get him...back" is frequently unaccompanied by conscious awareness or calculation of the likelihood that "he" will be driven to extraordinary lengths to seek, and may find, ways to retaliate in turn.

Bubbi!
abnormal The same may apply to Kennedy, in his covert program against Castro (and Khrushchev). Moreover, both Kennedy and Khrushchev see themselves as acting, legitimately, to preserve a status quo (against the illegitimate efforts of the other). Khrushchev is acting to defend the current status quo in Cuba; Kennedy works to restore the former, "normal" status quo, representing both "freedom" (as under Batista? anyway, non-socialism) and American hegemony in the Caribbean.

At any rate, Khrushchev sets out to avert the loss of Cuba (and to improve his own bargaining power in other context of recent and continuing humiliation, including Berlin, US bases on

the borders of Russia, and the arms race) by means of a fait accompli.

Consciously, so far as we know, he does not aim primarily at the humiliation of Kennedy, but for whatever reasons he disregards the dangers of doing so, taking no special steps to avert this or reduce it.

In the event, the potential humiliation of Kennedy becomes intense, partly for reasons the Soviets did not fully control. It was not totally foreseeable or totally their fault--certainly they did not desire it, though their own overt buildup of aid to Cuba was a major stimulant--that the Republican opposition would make a firm stand on Cuba--ranging to blockade or invasion--the primary issue of the fall election campaign, nor that Kennedy, responding to this challenge and believing Khrushchev's deliberately misleading private assurances, would make two explicit public warnings against what Khrushchev was in the process of secretly doing.

Kennedy's two public statements--combining invalid assurances with commitments to act if the warnings were ignored, and coming too late to influence Khrushchev's ongoing moves, unless by a truly extraordinary and bureaucratically dangerous reversal--make the crisis virtually inescapable, when secrecy fails.

On the other hand, these matters were not totally unforeseeable, either, at least as possibilities. They were results of the Soviets' own actions. The prior large, unprecedented buildup of Soviet assistance to Cuba was not at all unlikely to attract the attention of the Republicans, and even of Democrats in Congress, that it did cause. That this might evoke an explicit warning from the President was hardly unforeseeable.

Leaders, and for that matter staffs and intelligence agencies, can't foresee everything, realistically. But these are things that might well have been foreseen, and better prepared against, by Soviet officials if the extreme secrecy functionally required by the choice of a strategy of fait accompli had not sharply limited Soviet bureaucratic awareness of the project.

Again, this represents a kind of risk--generally unappreciated, unforeseen, by high-level decision-makers--of choosing a secretive, deceptive course, which denies them normal bureaucratic feedback.

On October 16, 1962, with the discovery of the missiles, Kennedy finds himself--to a degree that could not entirely have been anticipated and was surely not intended by Khrushchev in the spring or early summer--made politically vulnerable and potentially embarrassed by Khrushchev's move and his own

incautious warnings and assurances to a degree that could hardly have been exceeded. (See my accompanying paper, "Politics and the Cuban Missile Crisis.")

Though many of his non-politician advisors are prepared to accept Khrushchev's fait accompli, Kennedy secretly chooses crisis: and prepares to face down Khrushchev with a humiliating fait accompli of his own, a naval blockade of Soviet shipping...puis on voit...

Kennedy's intense personal and political vulnerability, which led him (I conjecture) to respond with an act of war, was closely matched nearly thirty years later by George Bush's situation on August 2, 1990, when his quasi-ally Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

In this case, the President had been led to make neither commitments to respond nor public assurances; but just as embarrassingly, he had clearly ignored warnings, he had been lulled by Saddam Hussein's assurances through American allies, and above all, he had defended Saddam's good intentions by extending credits and by opposing Democratic efforts to impose sanctions on Iraq up until a few days before the invasion.

In both instances, the American President set out secretly on a course of action intended not only to avert or reverse the humiliating policy failure but to humiliate his opponent.

In JFK's case, there was the irony that the President who was led to aim at this was one who earlier, later and even during the crisis was almost uniquely expressive of the importance of foregoing, in general, any intent to humiliate an opponent, because of the dangers of doing so.

One might note that Bush, despite spectacular success in some respects, has so far failed in this explicit objective. It seems no more easy to humiliate Saddam Hussein, and thus to drive him from political life, than to do these things to Richard Nixon.

Crises and Risks

Although in a specific context the failure of a fait accompli and its consequences may occur as a surprise, there is enough general appreciation of these risks that major faits accomplis are generally seen in advance as as dangerous, even desperate attempts. That raises the question as to why such all-or-nothing strategies are adopted.

In particular cases, the answer may be that the risks are underestimated or not seen at all; the strategy seems cheap or

Quayle/Newsom

relatively promising. But in other cases, including most of those examples mentioned above, though the risks were underestimated they were still seen as high. Why were they accepted?

One finds in a significant number of the historical examples that the situation that preceded and led to the attempted fait accompli had many of the characteristics of a crisis within the initiator's government. The attempted international fait accompli represents an attempted solution to this internal crisis, whose major pressures may be either domestic or international or a combination of both. The acceptance of a strategy of fait accompli whose risks are seen not as low but as moderate to high (though they may still be underestimated) reflects a sense of desperation in the regime's leader(s).

In particular, one finds that a sense of deadline dominates internal policy discussion, a sense that time is running out, that action must be undertaken urgently if at all, and that no traditional, familiar courses of action offers any chance of saving the situation in time. 14

The head of state and his most trusted advisors are faced with what they regard as a "last chance" to avert or reverse an unfavorable train of events. Whether or not circumstances are about to turn dramatically for the worse, the key consideration was that it is believed soon to become impossible to improve them or stop a downward trend, even by radical means. It is in this mood that radical means began to be contemplated, and an unconventional, complex, "tricky" and manifestly dangerous course aiming at a fait accompli may be adopted.

Thus, Hitler in 1937, 1938, and in 1939, hammered away at his reluctant generals on the necessity for carrying out what they regarded as desperate gambles before his opponents completed their rearmament (and before he himself might die or be eliminated--a deadline probably more significant for him than for his listeners).

The all-or-nothing sweep of the Japanese in the Pacific, including the surprise at Pearl Harbor, followed from a fairly precise calculation of the approaching moment at which their imperial ambitions would otherwise have to be abandoned, due to a strangulation of their oil supplies and war material.

In the case of the Bay of Pigs, the deadline for the U.S. decisionmakers was reportedly provided by the impending arrival of MIGs and Czech-trained pilots and of other defensive weapons in Cuba, and at the same time by the imminent decay of the covertly trained rebel forces as an instrument through denial of their bases and loss of their "cover." According to published accounts it was estimated that the operation was likely to be

successful if undertaken in the next month or two (April or May, 1961), and almost surely infeasible after that. Whether or not these actually were the estimates in that situation, it is in this frame of mind that radical actions are finally decided.

On the other hand, when the fait accompli is seen not as a desperate move but as a fairly unrisky one, the factor of timing may again be important in arriving at this estimate. The risks may be seen as low because of particular circumstances related to the timing. There may be special, and fleeting, opportunities for covering the operation or distracting the opponent in its early phases. Or special factors may be thought to operate, at a particular time and for a limited period, to inhibit the opponent from reacting either early or late. 15

Thus, a factor in the timing of the Israeli attack on the Sinai Peninsula in 1956 was said to be the Israeli calculation that a U.S. president would be too preoccupied to react decisively in the weeks prior to a presidential election, and moreover would be unwilling to move against the Israelis at the cost of Jewish votes.

Likewise, as I shall discuss in detail, there is a good deal of little-known evidence that the deployment of missiles in Cuba in 1962 may have been timed so that the relatively vulnerable pre-operational phase would occur during the last stages of the U.S. Congressional election campaign--ending just before the election--on the assumption that the administration would be unwilling to admit a challenge to action just prior to the elections.

There is indirect evidence that Khrushchev hoped that Kennedy would tacitly collaborate with him in keeping the fact of the missile deployment secret--if his own intelligence efforts should uncover them while the move was still vulnerable to low-risk attack--till after the election, after which it would be too late (Phase II) to respond to Republican pressures to attack them. This possibility may have contributed critically to Khrushchev's estimate that the overall risks were low enough to be acceptable.

If so, Khrushchev obviously miscalculated. Yet, hitherto-unreported data I found in 1964, to be presented elsewhere, indicates strongly a realistic basis for such a hope on Khrushchev's part. Khrushchev's error may have been not so much Kennedy's unwillingness to keep such information secret for a significant period, as his inability to keep it private long enough to get past the election.

The reasons for this inability in this case, and why Khrushchev may have been misled on this score--part of an

JCS

(no V-2 & others)

or JFK on Turkey?

adequate "theory of leaks," which the Soviets probably lacked-- will be presented in my longer account of the Missile Crisis. }

In most of these cases, the calculations leading to a sense either of desperation or of hope, of last chances or fleeting opportunities, were unknown to foreign heads of state at the time. They might well have appeared astounding and absurd, as well as ominous, if they had been known.

The actions that these calculation led to came as surprises to these opponents, because they were not only ignorant of the calculations, the mood of desperation or optimism, but they did not know that they did not know. On the contrary, they sometimes felt confident, wrongly, that they knew their opponent's thoughts and designs.

But because those opponents kept their calculations private and prepared their actions in secret, they in turn denied themselves the chance of discovering mistakes and unrealistic premises before it was too late. They denied themselves a chance of confronting that the "fleeting" opportunity would not soon disappear, or that it had already disappeared, or that the desperate action being prepared had no chance of succeeding, or had every chance of provoking disastrous reprisal. Thus the crisis was, inadvertently, prepared.

Faits Accomplis versus Publics and Allies

So far the secrecy and deception that characterize the attempted fait accompli have been related to their effect in deterring action by the opposing heads of state. But it may be regarded as of equal or even greater importance to conceal the preparations from two other audiences: (a) the opponent's public (the U-2 program and shootdown crisis); (b) the initiator's own public, or certain parts of his government (e.g., the Skybolt cancellation crisis: see the detailed discussion below).

Let us take the latter first. The head of state contemplating a certain change in the international status quo may well anticipate opposition from his own bureaucracy, or his public, or from allies or neutrals: opposition to the move itself, to its costs or the risks of counteraction, or to the methods involved.

Secrecy of preparations, and deceptive statements and moves, could allow him to get ahead with preparations, at least, for the move, without arousing this opposition. He might or might not propose to carry these preparations straight through to decisive action. He might, indeed, share the reservations of the critics of the move so long as certain circumstances prevailed, but he might wish to be in a position to carry it out quickly (and thus,

given the prior secrecy, in the form of a fait accompli) if circumstances changed.

[This may have applied to highly secret preparations the Kennedy Administration was making--some revealed only within recent months, others only a year ago--in the early fall of 1962 to be fully ready to invade Cuba by October 20.] by James Hershberg

On the other hand, if he can prevent his domestic or allied opposition from stifling the move in its earliest phases, he may hope to buy their approval with its eventual success. The only way to achieve this goal might be to conceal the operation from its potential critics and opponents.

Even after success, the leader would then face charges of misleading those whom he had a responsibility to inform; but the impact of this charge would be reduced by success, (as it would be overshadowed by failure) and reduced still further if it could be claimed that the secrecy was intrinsic to the success, that is, that it was essential to mislead the international opponents.

Thus, even though more open and direct tactics may be roughly as promising so far as the foreign adversary is concerned, the fait accompli may recommend itself as an approach because of the need, in fact, to confront one's own public or bureaucracy or allies with the move as a fait accompli.

The Bay of Pigs would seem an obvious example. Likewise--just after the first draft of these notes was first written in July 1964--the preparations for the Tonkin Gulf raids in August, 1964. Likewise the launching of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign against North Vietnam in February 1965; the subsequent introduction and escalations of US ground combat troops in South Vietnam.

More recently, the invasion of Grenada, the bombing attack on Libya, the invasion of Panama, and President Bush's probable plan as of late August, 1990--not wholly confirmed, and in any case not executed--to launch an offensive attack against Iraqi forces in Kuwait by October or November, before any such intention had been acknowledged by the Administration or authorized by Congress or the UN.

The other circumstances that recommend the fait accompli are those in which it is the attitude of the opponent's or an ally's public or allies or bureaucracy that is feared rather than the personal responses of the opposing or allied leaders themselves. Those leaders, whether they recognize the projected move early or late, might be expected to be acquiescent (even if unhappy) if they were insulated from domestic pressures. The problem, then, is to keep the project secret not so much from them as from the hotheaded elements in their population or alliances.

It may be necessary to deceive the leaders themselves, but only as incidental or instrumental to the end of deceiving these pressure groups. Since this presumes that the opposing leaders are believed to have significantly different attitudes or tendencies to action from dominant elements in their bureaucracy or populace, it might seem to be a very special situation. Yet this belief figures in a striking number of the attempted faits accomplis that we have mentioned.

Perhaps the reason is that this perception (that the opposing head is much less disposed to counter a particular move than important parts of his population, and perhaps much less opposed to the move than his public position would suggest) is particularly encouraging to an attempted fait accompli.

It appears to hedge against sloppiness in maintaining that secrecy against its true target, the opponent's public or domestic opposition. The risks of possible "leaks" are reduced, because the opposing or allied leader is not expected to be quick on the trigger in responding to ambiguous indications, or even to unambiguous discovery of the plans. Indeed, he is expected to keep quiet about any warning evidence until the operation is so far completed that he can claim to his public that he has "no choice" but to accept it.

To adopt the tactic of the fait accompli may even be seen as a favor to the opposing head of state. Whether he is thought to approve the move or to disapprove of it mildly or strongly, it is believed that he would prefer to be confronted with it suddenly in an "irreversible" form, rather than to be challenged to action by an overt process that would arouse his domestic activists. This was actually the case in the Skybolt Affair: see the discussion below. Conceivably Khrushchev persuaded himself that this was Kennedy's state of mind prior to the introduction of missiles into Cuba.

Similarly, the secrecy surrounding some clandestine operations, such as the U-2 overflights of Russia from 1956-1969, may be thought of as a "favor" to the opposing head of state who, lacking ability to counter the operation effectively, would prefer that his failure not be known to his own public or that he not be challenged by his own public or allies to counteraction that would be ineffective or unwise.

To enlist the collaboration of an apparently implacable opponent in a pact of secrecy is a sophisticated, esoteric tactic. The fact that it can work and that it has often worked is a fact best appreciated by heads of state, and concealed by them from others. The mistaken belief that it will work in a particular case is also, perforce, a type of miscalculation to which state leaders are particularly prone. It is sometimes

harder than they realize for their counterparts to keep things in the heads-of-state club.

In the case of the U-2, Khrushchev himself misguidedly broke the "pact" of secrecy by shooting down a plane as soon as he was able to. But Eisenhower then astounded him by breaking a related secret, which was his own personal knowledge of and responsibility for the individual, provocative flights. Eisenhower's reasons for doing this, and the dramatic consequences of his doing so--to be presented in the larger study--illustrate the strength and usefulness of the argument being developed here very sharply. 12

The combination of both the above motives occurs when one presents an ally with an act as a fait accompli not because the allied head of state himself opposes it, but in order to relieve him in the eyes of his own public or of common enemies from responsibility for the move or from opportunity and hence responsibility to oppose it.

Thus, the British and French took for granted that Eisenhower would approve the end result of their Suez operation in 1956, the toppling of Nasser, whatever he thought of the means or risks. Their decision to present their operation as a fait accompli not only to Nasser but to their close ally Eisenhower had the flavor of the first calculation above; but their secrecy may also have been conceived (most misguidedly) as a favor to Eisenhower, relieving him of the onus of the guilty knowledge of an aggressive project.

Their strategy failed, I will argue in the longer study, for much the same reason--inadvertent effects of their secrecy and deception--that Khrushchev's failed in the Cuban Missile Crisis and that Saddam Hussein's failed in Kuwait. In the latter case, the deception of close allies--and of their ally, George Bush--proved as fatal to Saddam's strategy as it had for the British and French in Suez, twenty-five years earlier.

The Skybolt Affair: Case Study of a Fait Malaccompli

Much of the abstract pattern we have described can be seen in an episode of a different character from the other examples: the cancellation of the Skybolt missile in 1962.

Here is a case where the "vulnerability" of the move depended greatly upon its timing. Early in August of 1962 McNamara concluded, on the basis of studies completed then, that the half-billion dollars still to be spent on Skybolt could be saved without loss by cancelling the weapon, given the expected effectiveness of competing weapons systems and the rising costs and low reliability of Skybolt itself.

Somewhat later, the essential decision was made by the President, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, that the half-billion dollar saving outweighed the pain that would be caused by the cancellation to the British.

Since it was no part of their objective to embarrass the British nor to shatter the "special relationship," the President and the two Secretaries agreed on the need to find as satisfactory a compensation for the British as possible. They were prepared, as were Macmillan and Thorneycroft, to contemplate Polaris in this role at this earlier stage, though large parts of the bureaucracy on each side of the Atlantic were not.

If the decision had simply been announced at the moment these conclusions were reached, it would have been short-lived. Opposition from the Air Force, supported from the aircraft industry, would have had effective expression in Congress. The tactic adopted was to sit tight on the conclusions at the time and to expose them and the decision based upon them for the first time in the budget recommendations, some three months later.

If a cancellation were presented in the form of a simple omission from an otherwise large defense budget, its vulnerability to reversal would be sharply altered. As a separate item earlier in abstraction from a budget, Congressional proponents of Skybolt could simply maintain that Skybolt was indispensable, leaving it to the Administration to bear the responsibility for any compensating cuts elsewhere that might be taken, or for the over-all size of the budget.

But confronted with a coherent and large budget that lacked provision for Skybolt, those who would urge that funds be added to the budget to keep the project going would either have to take the responsibility for swelling the large budget still further or they could be challenged to recommend and to take responsibility for specific cuts elsewhere. (In other words, the presentation of the budget proposal marked the transition, in our model, from

Phase I to Phase II). Thus, what McNamara proposed was to produce a fait accompli against the Air Force and its backers in Congress.

Any leakage even suggesting the imminence of this decision could have been fatal to the project. All that was necessary to block the move prior to December was for its opponents to raise the question in sharp debate or in a press conference to force the Administration to define its current position on Skybolt publicly and unequivocally. A premature statement of intention to drop Skybolt would then have provoked a demonstration of public (though specialized) support for the system.

The political costs of obduracy in the fact of this opposition would have been intense; for one thing, the opponents of the move would be encouraged (by the likelihood of success) to make threats, commitments, and alliances that might, in the end, virtually compel them to retaliate if the move was carried out. Moreover, if the alarm was sounded before suitable compensation had been worked out for the British, the Administration would be open to charges of heartlessness and betrayal, and the undesired political costs for Macmillan would be maximized.

Since the opposition tactics involved would be politically cheap, the slightest suspicion would be enough to provoke them; therefore, the level of suspicion had to be kept extraordinarily low. Secrecy was essential, and McNamara and the three or four assistants who were informed of his intentions proceeded to demonstrate extraordinary talent in keeping their mouths shut.

For the first month or two the proposal reached no one outside their circle, either in Defense, State Department, Budget Bureau or the White House. But secrecy was not enough. Some positive deception was unavoidable, both because some questions were being asked anyway on the basis of the rumors that always arose around budget time, and because some positive actions were required whose omission would instantly have given warning.

The time had arrived in the development process of Skybolt when funds for production tooling would have to be released if Skybolt were to proceed into the production phase without delay. In fact, it was just because Skybolt had reached this point that the Administration was feeling the urgency of a "last chance" to cancel it. Risky and painful as it would be to cancel it even at this late stage, it would become irreversible once large production commitments had been made to the project.

Not only was the project about to become enormously more expensive and to acquire even more intense supporters, but the very fact of large investments to be justified would soon make cutting it off as distasteful to the administration itself as to its current proponents, since in politics, bygones are never bygone. Thus, as usual, the tactic of the fait accompli,

somewhat desperate in itself, was adopted in a move of urgency as a last opportunity approached its deadline, beyond which even more desperate measures would be of no avail.

The Administration proceeded to release limited production funds for Skybolt, thus spending money for purposes of deception, giving a powerful signal of reassurance to supporters of the program. The funds were released on a month-by-month, tentative basis during the period of budget consideration, but this in itself gave no alarm, for such indications of soul-searching and reluctance had appeared every year at budget time, and frequently off-season as well.

When questions were put directly to the Administration by Thorneycroft, on the basis of more authoritative rumors, they were at first turned aside with deceptive or misleading answers. Here a phenomenon of the fait accompli which we have discussed a little earlier was at work. There was no desire, in fact, to deceive the British cabinet or even to delay their appreciation of the Administration's intention. However, to inform them prematurely was to take too great a risk of warning U.S. domestic opposition, via the channel British Cabinet-RAF-USAF-Congress.

In the earlier stage, then, there seemed no alternative to maintaining the deception against our ally as well. As we shall discuss, the process of secrecy and deception has costs and risks, and these apply as well when the information is withheld from a third party simply to block a communication channel to the primary opponent.

Later, when Thorneycroft and Macmillan were let in on the plan (in ample time prior to the estimated "leak date"--at which time the news would hit the two publics--for the two Cabinets to concert on a plan of compensation) the communication, for reasons of security, was informal, brief, inexplicit and strictly limited in its recipients. This, too, had its effects.

Meanwhile, the preconceptions of the "opposition"--the backers of Skybolt--were favorable to the strategy, for they all pointed to the implausibility of the Administration's undertaking this move. Indications of Administration unhappiness with Skybolt were not disquieting, for two different administrations had exhibited this unhappiness almost continuously from the outset of the program. Even fairly pointed attacks upon the program had been launched, without results.

The Administration was thought unlikely to take on a new battle with the Air Force just after its recent campaign against the B-70. (Actually, it was the experience with the B-70 that had given the administration a sense of deadline about the Skybolt; McNamara and the President now regarded it as a tactical error to have let the B-70 program continue as long as it had).

This was an underestimate of McNamara's heart for facing political opposition in Congress.

Moreover, the proponents of Skybolt were confident that the Administration would not pay the political costs of intensely displeasing (indeed, politically endangering) the British Cabinet, which had represented the promise of Skybolt as a major feature of its collaboration with the United States.

From one point of view, they overestimated the Administration's charity, or its prudence; from another, they underestimated the Administration's willingness to compensate the British; though, as it turned out, this program of compensation was carried out maladroitly.

Finally, the opposition was reassured in the short run by the absence of any warning indications. They were confident they would receive ample warning of any proposal to cut, either from the Administration itself--underestimating the Administration's ability to hold tight counsel and to stop leaks--or from the British RAF--underestimating the Administration's willingness to postpone informing the British, or to deceive them for a limited period.

Domestically, the tactics were a complete success. Security was essentially maintained until the Secretary's budget recommendations were sent to the JCS. The administration had managed quietly to occupy the high ground during the night, and the Air Force, recognizing the low promise of an uphill assault, accepted the change without a significance fight. The fait accompli with respect to the U.S. "opposition" was a success.

The results on the British side were more complicated, and far less happy. Here there was no intent to delude the British Cabinet nor, if it could be avoided, to damage their interests. But willingness to spare Macmillan a fait accompli, while presenting one to Congress, was a misunderstanding of Macmillan's domestic position.

Macmillan and Thorneycroft, while unhappy about the move, were themselves prepared to accept it and could readily conceive of adequate compensation. But it was essential to them that the move, if it must take place, be presented to them as a fait accompli. The impression would be disastrous that they had taken part in a discussion of the move--before it was settled and irreversible--in which they had not opposed the move bitterly, or in which they had treated the continuation of the Skybolt as at all negotiable.

If they were to persuade the Cabinet to accept the move as a fact rather than as a challenge, they had on the one hand to be able to disclaim all responsibility (including prior information

of the move) and simultaneously to be bearing in the other hand a concrete, generous, compensatory offer from the Americans. Only that combination could deter the pressure from the Cabinet, the Services, the party, and the public to do-or-die for dear old Skybolt; a fight which Macmillan and Thorneycroft knew, better than these others, would be hopeless--and for which they had no heart in any case.

But without the generous offer from the Americans, Macmillan and Thorneycroft would be forced to fight even if the prospects were hopeless, if only to punish their ally for the humiliation of the move. Macmillan did not tell the Cabinet; did not plan. McNamara expected detailed counterproposals.

What the U.S. Administration failed to appreciate was the urgency of Macmillan's and Thorneycroft's need to avoid appearing in the eyes of the British Cabinet and Services, to be trading, without a fight, the status quo on Skybolt for any alternative. The secrecy of the actual interaction was critical here, for it limited communication between the two heads of state and the Secretaries of Defense so sharply as to conceal from the Americans the precise nature of the English concerns.

For reasons of security (including security against the U.S. bureaucracy: for reasons I shall not go into here, the U.S. offer of Polaris to the British was likewise to be presented by Rusk to the State Department as a fait accompli) it was decided to avoid formal negotiations and to conduct the private negotiation in person.

But McNamara's interview with Thorneycroft was postponed for a variety of reasons until so late that fatal leaks had occurred to the British public and bureaucracy by the time it took place. And at this point, having failed to arrive at an adequate understanding of the British problems earlier, the Americans failed to present what Thorneycroft regarded as a minimum essential, concrete compensation: Polaris without strings.

The offer was susceptible to improvement, as the Nassau negotiations later proved. But to be forced to ask for these adjustments, in full view of the bureaucracy, Services and the public, rather than to be confronted with a satisfactory package on a take-it-or-leave-it basis was inexorably to challenge Macmillan and Thorneycroft to fight for the best deal they could get, rather than to exclude in defeatist fashion the reversal of the decision on Skybolt itself.

In short, what Thorneycroft had wanted to confront was a fait accompli; what he got was a crisis.

He proceeded, as is customary in these situations, to present his tormenting opponent/allies with a crisis of their

own. The ensuing process, through Nassau to DeGaulle's press conference in January and beyond, abounded in insult, humiliation, and intimations of maladroitness all around.

On both sides of the Atlantic, the episode illustrated the relations between crisis and attempted fait accompli. A crisis is, for a head of state, an urgent problem-solving situation. But a problem (as distinct, say, from an unfavorable or disappointing prospect) exists only if there is some possibility of finding a "solution," that is, a course of action that can improve matters or avert a decline.

A "problem" in this technical sense is a challenge to a politician, a public test upon which he will be judged. If he himself, privately, has little hope of success, or disagrees that a serious problem exists, then he would much prefer to skip this test.

A generous counteroffer from the Americans would have removed most the sting from the drive to regain Skybolt, but there would have been still some implication that the change was for the worse (else why had not the British pressed for it earlier?). Therefore, if they were to be spared a crisis, Macmillan and Thorneycroft wished it evident to all that there was no possibility to influence the decision; only thus could they be excused from the responsibility to challenge it.

Thus, Thorneycroft hoped that the cancellation of Skybolt could be presented as due to "technical infeasibility." To resist it then would be to oppose the laws of nature. The Minister of Defense is not required to be that romantic in defending England's honor.

But the Americans concluded that it would simply be impossible to conceal the fact that mainly economic laws were at work, (i.e., that British sensibilities--weighed in with marginal military benefits--were not worth half a billion dollars in the eyes of the U.S. administration). The problem before the two cabinets was precisely to lessen the humiliation for the British of the "revealed preference" of the US Administration.

Unfortunately, the British public, Services, and Cabinet were protected from the information in the early stages of the move by the tactics of fait accompli used both by the Americans and by Macmillan and Thorneycroft. When it burst upon them, as a surprise, it came prematurely, the secrecy having flown before a basic agreement had been worked out in saleable form. Yet it was not made obvious to these audiences that the situation was already hopeless, that Skybolt was out.

The British press proceeded to define the situation in such a way that for Macmillan to emerge from Nassau with anything but

Skybolt would be interpreted as failure. (Apparently Macmillan himself did not read this mood correctly; he left Nassau highly satisfied with the deal he had negotiated, having rejected a fairly generous offer by the United States to split the costs of continued development of Skybolt.) In short, one can fail at a fait accompli even when the opposing head of the state is cooperative. And the failure is the crisis.